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Bully For Her

Written by BlueKittyTales on commission for SaltirePhoenix.

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Part 1 – Two of Clubs

Wednesday March 4th 2020, 19:19. Love is in the air everywhere Denise and Freya look around. But for another soul, the game has a very different name.

Night was a very different place from day. No two countries had the same societies. Those who had wealth and those who did not lived very different lives. A king's needs were very different from a queen's. All of these thoughts raced around his head as he sat in the back of the taxi, its leisurely trundling doing nothing to distract him from why he had come here.

Life had not been kind to him. Ever since losing his girlfriend many years before, his life had not been the dream he had hoped it would be. He had stewed in the juices of his own obsession, his celebrity status having not been enough to satisfy his need. His football career had barely got off the ground following the incident that had torn her away from him, having only been able to join a low ranking league that paid him a pittance. Now, he was in many thousands in debt, and the creature he had thought of as his love had abandoned him a long time ago, denying him what he was entitled to.

Cheating on her should have been inconsequential to someone of his importance, but she had to take it completely the wrong way and violently attack him. She'd never been seen in the south of America again since then, and now, after much searching, he had finally managed to hunt her down. Festering in his brain for ten long years was his humiliation and his injuries at her hands. She would suffer for what she had done.

"Not very long now," he said, "you'll be all mine. And so will everything you have. Fucking insane bitch." He knew exactly where she was. He knew what country she'd fled to. Hatred even more twisted than a country road had grown, and soon, he had come to detest the country she was living in now, as well as every other member of her species. Even trying to extort her parents for his own form of retribution had failed, as they had appeared not to care. Her father had yelled him off the phone, claiming that he had no daughter.

Rather than feel comforted that he wasn't the only one she had angered, that only fuelled his rage. Rather than help him find her, all her father had done was place yet another obstacle in his path. Typical of her species. Why should he have expected anything else from them? But now that he'd noticed her name in the business pages of *The Stock Paper*, he was ready to enact the first phase of his plan. *Now you'll pay.* he thought, gritting his teeth as pictures of her appeared in his head again. *Now you'll suffer. You'll see what you were always meant to be, even if I have to bash the fucking teeth out your mouth to make you see it.*

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Freya and Denise's next mission had taken them to another district of their locale, this time having them work undercover as part of a sting operation. Though it wasn't the biggest of missions in comparison to an investigation their colleague Nova was currently undertaking, it did still allow them the chance to enter the country's political circles, even if this was just a tiny portion of them. More influence was always a good thing, especially when they were working in partnership with the police.

The hosts were a balding human named Peyton Still, who was a high profile politician, and his wife of twelve years, a smoke coloured vixen named Julia, who ran a CD printing business. They had chosen the most beautiful stately home they had ever seen, giving it a feel of the setting for Victorian aristocracy. Despite setting this mood, they had ordered copious amounts of booze and large amounts of food for the banquet, as well as a performance from a classical orchestra in the central living quarters. Unbeknownst to the guests, Peyton had talked Julia into hosting it with him so he could bait her, believing she was cheating on him with one of his invited guests.

It was to be the night that he hoped would finally solve the mystery of his wife's distance from him. Julia's purple dress she donned glimmered in the light from the many chandeliers hanging around the premises,

giving her a regal and elegant appearance. However, although she still used both her own wealth and her husband's to her advantage, others had remarked that there was no longer any chemistry between them at all over the past year. Instead, she'd often appeared disinterested in staying around him, and Peyton had not been slow to notice.

It proved to be a most romantic setting for Denise and Freya, who hadn't been able to help but get sucked in. Denise Watson, a white snake with glowing purple eyes and a mane of black hair and whose legs meant she was often mistaken for a lizard, and Freya Maxwell, a muscular cow with a head of brown hair and bright blue eyes, both saw the occasion as not only a mission, but in the environment, a date as well. And despite their misgivings about some of the guests, they had found it to be a very inviting and relaxing environment. They'd become good friends with Peyton in the past few months, only serving to strengthen their desire to find out the reason for Julia's coldness.

When they finally got a moment alone, they found their chance to tail Julia into one of the upstairs rooms. Denise and Freya drained their wine glasses and followed her, aware that the movements of her tail would signal whether she'd spotted them.

"Alright, here's our opportunity," whispered Freya. "You got your phone ready?"

"Right here," said Denise, patting the pocket of her dress.

"I think we might have our hot potato," said Freya, beckoning her forward. Julia had entered a room next to the bathroom, although Denise was quick to notice another guest coming, and pulled her into through the bathroom door. When the other room's door shut, they crept out, and were aghast at what they saw. Denise fumbled with her phone and peered it at the keyhole, and one peep revealed Julia kissing and then having sex with one of Peyton's colleagues.

Although her husband had chatted with many of the guests and seemed content at letting her wander, he was shocked when the women reported what they'd found and showed him their photos. He was utterly heartbroken, and consequently he ended the party prematurely. Freya and Denise were seen out, waving him a friendly goodbye, even as he tried all he could to maintain his composure upon this devastating revelation. When the door closed, Peyton could be heard crying while Julia tried profusely to apologise, only for her husband's despair to morph into anger.

"I didn't expect this party to be so low brow, all things considering," commented Denise once their taxi started moving. She slid the soundproof window between them and the driver closed. "We got all dolled up for nothing!"

"That may be true," said Freya, stroking her on the shoulder. "But we did at least get what we came here for." Denise got out her mobile phone and showed her the photographs again, the women sharing grave expressions.

"That's going to be an expensive divorce," said Denise sadly.

"And it'll be all over the papers," added Freya. *And I know what the fucking media is like. she thought bitterly. They'll find any excuse to tear him to shreds as long as it sells more papers.*

"Yeah, I imagine it's going to be for a while," said Denise. "But still, this made for a good date."

"I don't know if I'd call it that," said Freya. "You might be in that beautiful dress and I might be in this lovely suit, but that was only so we wouldn't be turned away from this party."

"Yeah, but you can't deny how natural you looked tonight," smirked Denise, her forked snake tongue tasting the air around her. Freya smoothed down her suit and adjusted her tie as the vehicle stopped at the traffic lights before a short dual carriageway, studying her expression.

"There's going to be fallout," said Freya.

"After what Julia did?" said Denise. "Yeah, I should think it won't only be the papers who will get in on it. They got up to even more than we did on Saturday night. And there's the celebrity magazines too." Yes, thought Freya. *And they're even worse than the newspapers.*

"Oh, hot dog," said Freya bitterly. "Let's see him try and find a new girlfriend after that."

“Don’t you mean Julia?” said Denise. Freya frowned.

“They’ll find a way to put the blame onto him.” she said. “Whatever he’s done or hasn’t done in bed, it’s not like it’s any of the public’s business. There’s already been a lot of speculation about it because a fox is married to a human. What’s the big fucking deal? They’re hardly any different from us.”

“Don’t get yourself too wrapped up about that.” said Denise as the car began to move again.

“That’s a bit rich coming from you, snakey.” said Freya, not able to disguise a smile as she looked over her. “I don’t have a flexible spine like you do.”

“You sure about that?” smirked Denise. “I’m not the only one who can get flexible! My favourite cow has some moves of her own, you know.”

“Well, yes.” said Freya bashfully. “I can’t deny that.”

“We can find out later if you want.” said Denise, cuddling up with her. “Still, Peyton’s a responsible guy – well, compared to some of his colleagues, anyway.”

“You mean like that Larry Harrison guy who got caught running that Ponzi scheme?”

“Uh, something like that, yeah. He’s secretive too. He won’t trust just anyone with intimate details.”

“I’m sure he’ll be fine, Denise.” said Freya. “He’s survived worse than this.”

“I hope so. But it probably won’t be the last time either, considering that employee rights business he got himself mixed up with. That union representative got killed when he discussed with him the idea of cleaning up the workers’ unions.” said Denise. At that moment, she saw the sign revealing her street’s name, Brentwood Forest Gardens. Finally, they could return to the threads of life they were more familiar with.

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Every time Denise had seen 58 Brentwood Forest Gardens, she was convinced that she was looking at a miniature palace rather than Freya’s home, exacerbated by the modesty she showed around her. She still remembered the very first time she had come here, which took her back to when she was first courting Freya. It was a day she still regretted despite it having ended on a high note, due to her actions having awakened a memory her love had tried so hard to forget.

Denise paid the taxi driver and they headed to the front door. Confident that he hadn’t overheard them, Freya opened the front door and led her in.

“Where does this leave us, then?” asked Denise.

“We have to get the pictures over to Peyton.” said Freya. “He might have seen them, but he needs to have copies of them. I don’t think his wife will have any form of recourse after that, since you know she’ll try and deny it every chance she gets. This is basically a back rank checkmate once he has that.”

“I see what you mean.” said Denise sadly. “There will be the old line ‘this isn’t what it looks like’. But I can’t point to one time, inside or outside of our jobs, where I’ve seen that line work. Except maybe in a couple of the roleplays we’ve done, my dear.”

“Neither can I.” said Freya.

“At least you never have to worry about that with me.” smiled Denise. “You mean too much to me for that. Look how many boxes of chocolates I showered you with on Valentine’s Day.”

“We’ve got something very special, you and me.” said Freya, stroking Denise’s jaws as they made their way up to the master bedroom. “Sure, I wasn’t sure I wanted to do it at first, after what happened the first time you came to this house. I know you weren’t aware of what happened, but I’ve never regretted giving you the key to my heart.”

“I know what that feels like.” said Denise as they began to change out of their formal garments and back into the casual clothing they’d met in earlier. “I’m your secretary, but I cannot imagine my working life any other way right now. I feel like Epsilon when Nova gives him his favourite sweets!”

"Well soon, this'll be your home too." smiled Freya fondly. "But I can't understand why you never stay for very long at a time."

"You're my favourite part of this house." said Denise affectionately.

"You're very kind." simpered Freya.

"I try my best for my favourite cow."

"Well, then what's the problem?"

"It just doesn't feel like mine. I think...it's too good for me."

"You know what's mine is yours and vice versa, Denise." said Freya. Her expression was curt, but her voice was as warm as a freshly brewed cup of coffee. "We share more than just a job, you know."

"I've never forgotten the very first day we met." said Denise. "For the way you've helped me, I'm in debt to you in a way I don't think I can ever repay."

"Thanks aren't necessary. It wasn't a cut and dry case, but the way I see it, I was doing my job those days."

"I feel differently. If it wasn't for you, then I would probably be rotting in some women's prison somewhere. It feels like you saved my life."

"All in a day's work, Denise. You know how this business is."

"Oh, don't be so modest." said Denise with a smile. "You know, it's been two years since we started dating."

"It's been a while, hasn't it?" she said, stroking her on the shoulder.

"It really has been. And a very eventful while too. What I wonder about is how my family will take it. They're aware of where I work now, but they have no idea we're dating."

"Don't forget that I know your parents, Denise." said Freya. "And they don't strike me as the kind of creatures who would turf you out when they find out you're lesbian. They never would have stood by you if they were, whether they're aware or not."

"I don't think they know I swing this way." said Denise, a sliver of trepidation in her voice. "What do you think? How do I break it to them?" Freya showed a gentle smile.

"If I was in your shoes and I had those cute feet of yours," she said, "I'd treat it like I would treat any other relationship. Don't try and hide it from them should they come around."

"I don't know if I'm ready to make it that public yet. I mean, Nova doesn't even know yet."

"He's not stupid, Denise. He'll figure it out what's going on between us eventually. You know how he is whenever we send him out on a case."

"I guess that's true."

"Maybe we could go and visit them when we can get a little time off. I don't see our relationship as being much different from how it would be if you were dating a man, except we can't get pregnant using just us."

"I see your point. We can think of a way for the next time I meet them."

"Looking back on it, it's like we only met yesterday."

"And it's been ten years since you came to Scotland too. Sometimes I wish I'd met you a lot earlier than I did." Freya looked as though Denise had just uttered the worst insult she could possibly think of. She turned away, the affection in her eyes replaced by blankness.

"Freya, what's wrong?" She reached for Freya, only for her to smack her hand away.

"Don't touch me." she snapped. She sat down on the bed, and Denise saw her run her hand down her face.

"Are you okay?" asked Denise, approaching her gingerly. This time, she didn't push her away when she cuddled her.

"I'm sorry, Denise." said Freya, looking more downhearted than she'd seen her in a very long time. "Being reminded of how long I've been in this country brought back some painful memories."

"I'm so sorry, Freya." she said mournfully. "I didn't mean to –"

"No, this isn't your fault." said Freya. "I should get a hold of myself a little more."

"I'd be the same if I was you." replied Denise. She sighed to herself heavily. "Your told me what your ex did to you. He sounds like he was a real piece of shit, and that's something I hope I'll never turn into. I shouldn't have said that about how long you've been here."

"You're not even close to what he was like," said Freya very matter of factly, "so don't, as you said to me earlier, get too wrapped up about it." Denise was happy to see her smile as she said this.

"I can go and boil some coffee." offered Denise. "I know how you like yours with cream."

"That would be nice." sighed Freya, and as Denise left, she kicked off her shoes and laid back on the bed, spreading out her limbs. Denise peeked around the door frame. *That could have gone worse.* she thought. *But I don't think she's let that chapter of her life go yet.*

When she returned a moment later with two coffee cups and a tube of whipped cream, her mind having been on what she'd said the entire time, Freya was going through a stack of papers and had a spreadsheet program open on her laptop. Her face was visible in the reflection from its monitor, and the expression on her face told her that she was reflecting on what had happened prior to her coming to the country.

Denise recalled her teenage years when she had fallen in with a bad crowd due to the frustration she felt towards her parents' seemingly humdrum lives, soon taken to rebelling against society both in the way she dressed and how she treated others. To ensure her parents didn't find out, she would swap out her clothing and wig before coming home and just after leaving, even though at first, their actions were largely innocuous. But when the creatures she'd looked up to as her friends started to move on to crime, she had been reluctant to partake in. For this disobedience, they had, upon being caught and taken into custody, falsely claimed that she masterminded the robbery they committed against an elderly neighbour, despite being the only one not to have taken part.

Her parents, aware she was innocent, had done all she could to try and clear her name, and had turned to Freya's private investigation business when it looked like she would be sent down. Since that day, her life had never been the same again, and now she hadn't been able to remember the last time she wore what she referred to as punk clothing. She had always felt a high level of gratitude towards Freya for this, and no matter what she did for her, she didn't feel like it would ever be enough. And it was only then that she noticed the bovine had turned away from her laptop and was watching her curiously.

"Are you feeling alright?" Freya and Denise both said at exactly the same time. They each looked quite shocked.

"Oh, now we're finishing each other's sentences." smirked Denise. "We'll be reading each other's minds next."

"Better not do that publicly." remarked Freya. "You'll set the conspiracy theorists off, right?" Denise let out a hearty laugh as she set down the tray on the chest of drawers. "Hey, those coffees look really good!"

"I told you," simpered Denise, "I do my best for my favourite bovine."

"I guess I can't deny that." said Freya. She took her cup and sipped from it, smirking at the sweet taste. "I remember the last time we got a call about a UFO. If we'd sent one of our investigators after that one, we'd have made this department and the police the laughing stock of Scotland."

"That's a picture I could have done without." said Denise, shuddering at the thought. She sipped from her own cup. Rather than bitter, the cream made the coffee as sweet as if caramel had been stirred into it. *I'm getting good at this.* she thought. *I wonder how well it would go down if I started offering her cups of coffee at work.* "What are you doing?"

"I've got the accounts to deal with," said Freya. "Then I've got two hour's paperwork to get through as regards Peyton Still and the Limbury Street sex attacks. So, I expect it to be a long night."

"Oh, I can't let you do all that by yourself, teacup," smiled Denise.

"Using my safe word, I see," said Freya dryly.

"I can deal with those finances for you," offered Denise. "I haven't got anything else planned for tonight, and Benny and Anne have already taken over our duties for the night. They've got their own things to do, and they know we're the ones who deal with accounts." Freya looked up from the laptop, looking up to her with bright, beaming eyes.

"At times like this," said Freya, "I ask myself what I'd do without you."

"You didn't hire me as your secretary so I could just sit around," smiled Denise. "Finding someone who actually wants to do a job isn't easy these days."

"This is very true," agreed Freya. "But I trust myself more than anyone else when it comes to dealing with my bank accounts."

"You've had to do a lot these past few weeks," insisted Denise. "A fresh pair of eyes looking over these would give you a well deserved break. I've been following them as closely as you have." Even though Freya appeared to consider this unnecessary, she copied the spreadsheet files to a USB flash drive and handed it to Denise.

"As long as you're sure about this," said Freya. "I can trust you. But do you think you'll be able to get the financial report completed tonight? We both know what needs to be done with reporting on last month's accounts, and I should have had them completed last week. All the relevant information is on that drive."

"I think I can do it," said Denise. "You'll be the first to know if I cannot finish it in time."

"So you're not staying?"

"I've got packing to do tonight. I should have said earlier. I've already started putting away some of my clothing and my electronics."

"It's always a shame when you have to go. But I get it. It's a bigger place than what you're used to, even after all this time."

"I still can't bend my head or my spine around the idea that I'll be living in this palace soon."

"Oh, this isn't a palace," said Freya. "It's not even close to the stately home Peyton hired. Besides, have you forgotten where I used to sleep? Until I got this house, all I had was my office's floor. I could have used the flat it came with, but there were others who needed it more than I did. Like the tenants we've got now, for instance. I couldn't just let Nova and Epsilon end up homeless after their orphanage threw them out after Nova turned eighteen. We're the only thing they've got."

"I see your point. But I'm still...mystified by the idea you managed to get it."

"You might say I bought at the right time. After my business helped bring down those drug barons, that's when the police and the public started to really take it seriously. They started to enlist our help with cases that threatened to turn cold too. I couldn't believe how many we were getting tasked with thereafter, and by then, the money was pouring in. With how much this business rakes in now, being able to afford this place is no problem."

"I still think all of this is too good for me."

"I already told you, Denise. What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine. You know you'll always be welcome here no matter what. And I'd be lying if I said I wasn't looking forward to having you living here."

"All the more reason for me to get on with it, then! When do you want me?"

"Whenever you feel ready, my love. You don't need me to tell you that this is a big decision to make."

"There's no doubt in my mind this'll be the right one." Denise stroked her on the shoulder, before she drained the rest of her coffee while Freya sipped from hers. "I'll see you tomorrow. This paperwork won't get itself done."

"If you call in sick," said Freya, "shall I assume you've got a bad case of being in love?"

"That's a very quick diagnosis, Nurse Maxwell!" giggled Denise. "What's the remedy?"

"Oh, I'm afraid we might have to keep you in overnight." crooned Freya. "This is a very serious case."

"It is?"

"Oh yes. I'm afraid there's only one cure."

"And what's that, Nurse Maxwell?"

"Plenty of bed rest." said Freya. "And lots of hugs and kisses for snakey."

"Ooh, that sounds great!" grinned Denise. "And that is very tempting. But these accounts won't get themselves over and done with."

"Maybe we can do that tomorrow night." suggested Freya. "We could get a booking at our usual restaurant beforehand."

"Now you're getting into it." said Denise. "I'll leave you to it, okay?"

"I still say it's a shame you couldn't stay tonight." said Freya, and Denise thought she could see her pouting, like a young calf denied her favourite sweets. "But we'll do something tomorrow, okay?"

"I can't wait!" said Denise brightly as she trotted down the stairs. "I'll see you in the morning!"

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The roads were still busy even for that time of night, and she found herself wishing that she had brought her own laptop with her. It would have been a good chance to spend even more time with the woman she adored. Freya permeated her thoughts, threading herself into her very being like woven silk. She found herself wistfully daydreaming about sharing a dance with her, taking her out on a date, walking together on a moonlit beach. There was never anywhere in Scotland that was very far from the sea. Her imagination was all she had to distract herself from the slow moving traffic, and suddenly, her ambient music shut off, interrupted by a traffic report.

"This is Mark Blackburn bringing you the latest on the roads for Inner City Radio." it said. "We've got big problems in the centre of town thanks to a nasty five car accident that's keeping traffic backed up for at least five miles. Ambulances and the fire brigade are already on scene. Those of you who are heading into the city will be aware of the diversions to the surrounding districts. And now let's take a look at the motorways..."

"Ugh, fuck this." muttered Denise to herself. "I'm not waiting for this lot." Irritated, she turned around in the middle of the road and headed back the opposite way, taking a much longer route that wove through several villages. And at last, after what felt like an eternity, she finally arrived outside her flat, papers clutched closely to her chest as though they were the most precious garments imaginable.

However, before she could fish the keys out of her pocket, she soon found her forked tongue tasting the air around her. Someone else was here. It was someone she didn't recognise. Her senses were alight and she was desperate to know what was going on.

"Who's there?" she asked. "Are you trying to –" She never finished. Her night was cut short at that very moment by a blow to the back of her head. All went black as her body went limp and her papers scattered, all semblance of consciousness vanishing in a flash.